



Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

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EL7002-8

Dr. Linda Collins

E-Learning Instructional Strategies

Activity #3: Top Level Management Buy-In

Comments:

Faculty Use Only

Hi, Michael, I am glad you enjoyed this activity, excellent work with inclusive information and clearly defined objectives. The only item I do not see addressed beyond mentioning it are the financial implications – what type of budget will be needed, how will this affect the strategic plan, etc. Please see additional comments in the paper. Dr. Collins

Dr. Linda D. Collins 6.7 2.9 October 9, 2013

Proposing a Blended E-Learning Approach to Public Education

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Northcentral University

Proposing a Blended E-Learning Approach to Public Education

XYZ school system (a pseudonym for a school district) prides itself on providing quality education that supports its students, parents and community members. This school system is comprised of 38 schools with an average daily attendance of approximately 30,000 students. The school's mission statement is "To Educate and Empower Our Students to Reach Their Potential". Additionally, the school system's goal is to increase student achievement by maximizing efficiency and effectiveness while using its resources to support school needs. The purpose of this paper is to propose the implementation of a blended e-learning public education approach to learning in the XYZ K-12 learning environment. The paper will include a description of XYZ school system and how the school system can benefit from implementing blended e-learning strategies and appropriate technologies in all grade levels. Providing specific examples, financial implications, and proposed action steps within the existing technology infrastructure and support will show the potential success integrating a blended e-learning environment into the current K-12 public education program has on improving student achievement.

Traditional and Online Learning

Students, in a traditional classroom environment, depend on the teacher to deliver, guide, manage, and maintain the flow of instruction using an asynchronous approach to education. The student views the teacher as an authority figure conveying information in a face-to-face learning environment (Martin, 2009). However, this is not the case in an online learning environment where there is a shift in the student-teacher relationship, the educational model, and the learning environment. This transition and integration of e-learning technologies is now the most

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important approach in teaching pedagogy (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Chou & Chou, 2011; Gunn & Hollingsworth, 2013). A successful e-learning environment embodies a blended educational approach, which is required to meet the needs of today's students receiving public education (Chou & Chou, 2011; Gunn & Hollingsworth, 2013).

Blended E-Learning

XYZ school system's goal and mission is aligned with increasing student achievement and improving teaching methods and strategies. Now more than ever there is a sense of urgency to transform education into something new and innovative. Gunn and Hollingsworth (2013) indicate that traditional education is beginning to give way to more innovative learning approaches. This is due to the increase in availability and number of information technologies changing the way people use technology in their everyday lives. Despite the many teachers in the XYZ school system that have already embedded the use of computers and the internet into their lessons the effective use and integration of these technologies are still quite slow.

Blended learning is an integration of synchronous and asynchronous learning approaches and the use of supporting technologies, which can be integrated in the classroom or in online learning environments. The transformative potential in combining a synchronous and asynchronous approach to the current education system results in an e-learning approach to education called blended learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Er, Özden, & Arifoglu, 2009; Chou & Chou, 2011; Gunn & Hollingsworth, 2013). There is evidence that blended learning environments have the potential to transform learning (Garrison & Kanuka).

Benefits of a Blended E-Learning Environment

A review of the research indicates that information and communication technology used in the classroom decreases student barriers to learning and improves student achievement (Gunn

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Comment [3]: This is good information to mention to set the foundation for the management buy-in.

& Hollingsworth, 2013). Garrison and Kanuka (2004) reported that students achieved better in online learning environments compared to traditional classroom only environments. Other benefits achieved by blended e-learning environments included better student attitudes toward content and student satisfaction with delivery of instruction and learning compared to traditional only formats (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Overall, the reviewed literature and research supports using computer technology, social media, and Web2.0 applications to increase student participation, motivation, and ultimately increasing student achievement (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Er et al., 2009; Hastie, Hung, Chen, Kinsuk, 2010; Chou & Chou, 2011; Gunn & Hollingsworth, 2013).

Through the use of asynchronous and synchronous learning strategies, computer technology, and Web2.0 online applications embedded in the K-12 public curriculum the school system can make available a technologically rich blended learning environment. With this new learning methodology the school system will be able to offer three different types of learning and teaching approaches to education that will optimize and increase student achievement with little financial implications: traditional classroom, blended classroom, and online only learning. It is this new overall approach to teaching and learning that will drive teacher excellence and increase student achievement in XYZ school system. The XYZ school system will serve its technologically savvy and internet native students better, preparing them for college and/or a career ready world in the 21st century, with the implementation of these three learning approaches to education. The following sections describe each learning approach and learning environment and will identify examples of specific e-learning resources that XYZ can integrate into its current K-12 learning curriculum.

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Traditional Classroom Environment

One of the most important advantages of traditional learning environments is synchronous communication between students and teachers (Chou & Chou, 2011). In this learning environment teachers are able to provide students with immediate feedback and instruction. Learning happens in a collaborative setting utilizing the existing faculty. We have the instructors to provide face-to-face learning in the traditional classroom. Students would continue to attend classes, having the benefit of an instructional expert and freedom to provide a learning experience tailored to the learning needs of each student or a group of students. This is considered a synchronous learning environment and for some students proves the most effective way to learn (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

Blended Classroom Environment

E-learning lends itself more naturally to an Andragogical approach to teaching using synchronous and asynchronous technology resources to drive instruction and learning (Martin, 2009). This is often referred to as a blended learning environment, which is also called a blended e-learning system. A blended e-learning system is an instructional system that includes different learning methods such as face-to-face and online learning strategies and resources (Chou & Chou, 2011). Chou and Chou (2011) also characterize this blended approach to learning as “maximizing the best advantages of face-to-face and online education” (p. 464). In this blended classroom environment students would be given the opportunity to learn using technology and Web2.0 applications, not just as a means to deliver information, but also as an integrated and natural part of how teaching and learning happens in and outside the traditional classroom. The integration of online resources like e-folios, Google docs, and online classroom

portals like Edmodo makes it possible to provide students with a synchronous and asynchronous learning environment, in which the student can pursue learning at their own pace, while having the immediate guidance of the classroom teacher (Mason, Pegler, & Weller, 2004; Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). Allowing teachers to integrate online technologies into traditional teaching practices will encourage collaboration, self-learning, enhance existing student learning experiences, and support learning discovery and lifelong learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

Online Only Environment

Collins (2011) states that 65 percent of learning still happens in the traditional classroom environment however, this number is decreasing as online course design improves. Online only learning environments are based on internet connectivity, providing students with a less structured and more flexible learning space (Kaymak & Horzum, 2013). In an online only learning environment students will receive the same content as in traditional classrooms, and can study at a time that best meets their individual learning needs. This is considered self-paced learning. Self-paced learning contributes to a Constructivist approach to learning because it addresses different learning needs and abilities (Buraphadeja & Kumnuanta, 2011). This approach to learning allows teachers to provide pertinent information to students while allowing them the control of pursuing that learning at their own pace. It is important however, that consistent interaction between teacher-student and student-student be maintained as an embedded part of the online curriculum. The research reviewed suggested that constant interactions increased the probability that online students would successfully complete an online only program (Buraphadeja & Kumnuanta, 2011; Kaymak & Horzum, 2013). Interactions like Skype for face-to-face instruction and email communication can also increase student

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satisfaction with online only classroom instruction (Mason, Pegler, & Weller, 2004; Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005).

XYZ Current E-Learning Status

Central Office of XYZ currently holds a nationally recognized Quality Management Certification, as a result of stakeholder feedback, to improve the services and resources provided to the schools by central operations. The XYZ technology department is responsible for the distribution and maintenance of hardware and network resources and the support and instruction for every technology resource in the district. Currently the technology department provides laptop computers for classroom use at each school location.

Students in the elementary schools work on Mac computers, while the resources in the middle and high schools are typically Dell PCs. Software is provided and integrated with the classroom curriculum to help develop computer literacy at an early stage. Model classrooms are also found in most schools, with expansion planned as the budget allows. A model classroom consists of a document camera, an overhead projector, lanyard microphones for instruction, and an audio/video system. Students are also provided a district supported email address through Microsoft Office 365 to encourage collaboration and communication in their studies. Classroom teachers are also provided with a district laptop and email address during their employment with XYZ. Teachers are provided support and training to make optimal use of classroom technology for efficient classroom teaching and learning. Faculty can request support, repairs, or training through the XYZ work order system.

Next Steps

First, XYZ should identify the best way to begin implementing each of the three different learning methods and how to embed them into the current learning structure and practice.

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Comment [7]: This is important information about the three learning formats you are discussing.

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Comment [9]: Good description of the resources.

Second, the school system should develop staff development trainings, coaching guidelines, and technology support for quality implementation of the proposed blended learning environments.

Third, XYZ should assess student motivation and willingness to learn using informational technologies and Web2.0 applications. Fourth, a timeline should be created to indicate how the three learning methods will be integrated into the current K-12 curriculum. Fifth, the school system should ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the overall approach to teaching and learning that will drive teacher excellence and increase student achievement in XYZ (Collins, 2011).

Conclusion

The technologies and approach to education associated with synchronous and asynchronous learning can improve the quality of teacher instruction, student-teacher interactions, and improve student learning outcomes (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Hastie et al., 2010; Gunn & Hollingsworth, 2013). There are strengths and weaknesses to both learning methods. Some students like a synchronous classroom only learning environments because they need face-to-face instruction and instant feedback. For other students an asynchronous online only learning environment provides more time student reflection and self-paced learning (Mason et al., 2004; Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). While there are those students that benefit the most from a blended e-learning environment where learning happens in the classroom and outside the four walls of a traditional learning environment (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Chou & Chou, 2011; Gunn & Hollingsworth, 2013). All three learning approaches have very unique benefits and limitations however, a blended online learning environment has the most potential to meet many learning and teaching styles, increase student achievement, and improve teacher instruction (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Er et al., 2009; Chou & Chou, 2011; Gunn & Hollingsworth, 2013).

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Comment [10]: And continued professional development?

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Comment [11]: Timelines are very important and there is a need to address scope creep.

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